



**Andrew Skelton**  
*completes his  
 foundational guide  
 to help you to master  
 color contrasts and  
 subtle mixes of  
 wood tones in your  
 woodworking designs*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR

# Coats of many Colors

**C**olor is often an important element of a client's design request, as I said in Part 1. (AR Issue 2, page 73) They may want a warm wood or a cool pale wood or want to create a sense of sophistication. That is why we need to learn to use color contrasts with intent. When one design works better than another one, there's often a good reason for it!

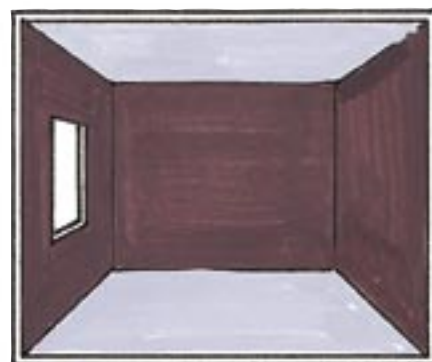
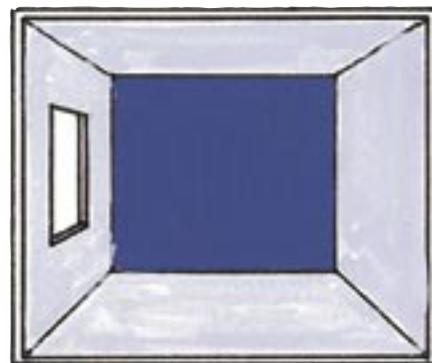
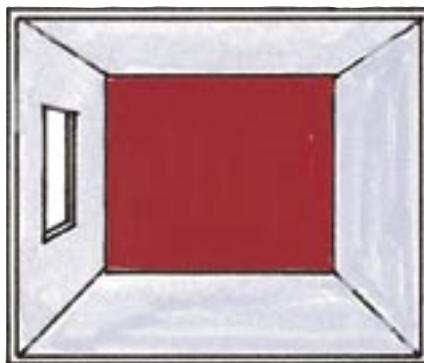
## Part 2

### Near Horizons

Fig. 1

Color can be used to alter the proportions of a room, and you might paint the end wall of a long corridor red which will make it seem nearer (and thus less daunting) than if it were a cold color such as blue.

We tend to perceive the world in relation to the outdoors with a sort of color gravity expressed by the dark tones of the ground, the middle tones of the distant horizon and the light tones of the sky. We can play visual tricks with this arrangement by painting the ceiling of a room a dark color to make it appear lower and wider (this effect is further emphasized by using a dark floor covering) or by painting the walls a dark color to make the room appear taller.



**Slim in Black**

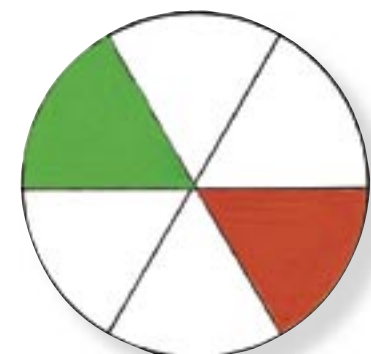
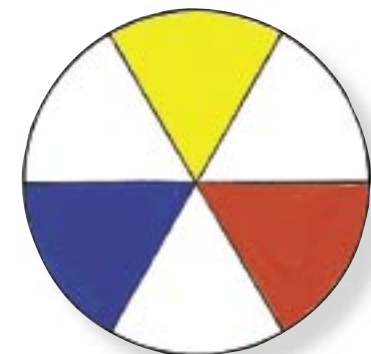
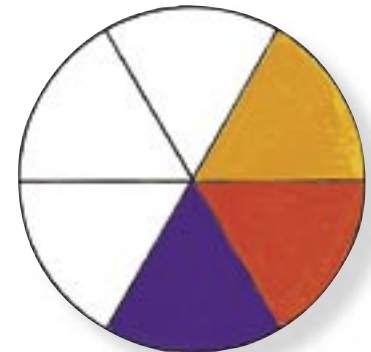
**Fig. 2**



A fact perhaps noticed by designers who wear black as uniform these days (me too I'm afraid) is illustrated here – the black shape looks thinner to the eye than the red one.

**Color Harmonies Fig. 3**

What might have looked good in the '70s is rather unappealing today – did I really paint my room brown and cream? It is meaningless to suggest that there are absolute rules of color harmony, but there are ways of thinking about color combinations that can be helpful. It is worth looking at ways colors are used in graphic design, and being analytical of the relationships they use and of their effects. This shows the basic ways we might choose colors. They can be similar – adjacent to each other on the color wheel – red with oranges and purples; they can be contrasting – separated from each other on the color wheel – red with blues and yellows; or they can be complementary – opposite each other on the color wheel – red and green.



**Grey Mix**

**Fig. 4**



This shows a simple color harmony using colors of the same hue with different amounts of grey. These are almost highlights and shadows – the contrast obtained by tone and saturation alone.

**Dull Trio**

**Fig. 5**



Three similar colors in progression around the color wheel. The colors are all of the same dull tone and the effect is rather boring.

**Brighter Group**

**Fig. 6**



Also using three similar colors but achieving a much more dramatic effect by separating the two bright colors with a light one.

**Chaotic**

**Fig. 7**



A combination of contrasting colors, which although fun and young-looking, seems confused and random.

**Complementary**

**Fig. 8**



Colors of the same hue – used with a complementary highlight color.

**Natural Hues**

**Fig. 9**



Natural colors that could be chosen from a fruit bowl or vegetable basket are usually pleasing and relaxing. Color schemes that use only natural pigments are often very harmonious. Dark and muted natural colors can be a bit boring, and in nature, can be enlivened by a touch of a complementary color.

**Vibrant Colors**

**Fig. 10**



The red and the pink would clash if not separated by the blue.

**Hot**

**Fig. 11**



Warm color schemes usually use reds, yellows and browns, but can also incorporate warm greys and greens. Warm colors tend to dominate cool colors.

**Cold**

**Fig. 12**



Cool colors tend to feel clinical and hard, and are often used in bathrooms where they look refreshing and clean.

**Welcoming**

**Fig. 13**



I recently used these colors in a reception desk. The architect had already used cedar and dark burgundy paint in the room, and I followed this with my design and introduced a light grey color for the desk tops. I wanted the large desk to feel open and spacious. The combination worked really well, but I had to avoid putting the burgundy paint and the light grey next to each other as they gave a strong contrast.

